

NASAA Deputy Directors Meeting Summary – February 5, 2026

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Overview

Deputy Directors shared updates from their states, discussed current priorities and challenges, and exchanged resources related to grantmaking, creative aging, arts & health, creative economy research, and America250 initiatives. Lara Garritano (National Endowment for the Arts) joined as a guest to provide federal updates and answer questions.

Common focus areas:

- Strategic planning and organizational redesign
- Grant program modernization and data system transitions
- America250 planning and implementation
- Creative aging and arts & health initiatives
- Legislative engagement and funding stability
- Creative economy research

State Arts Agency Updates & Peer Highlights

Participants shared current initiatives and operational developments.

Cross-agency discussion reflected strong interest in peer learning around data systems, evaluation tools, and legislative strategies, as well as appreciation for shared vendor and research resources

NEA Federal Updates

Lara Garritano provided key updates and responded to participants' questions.

Funding Deadlines & Opportunities

- Grants for Arts Projects (GAP)
 - Deadline: February 16, 2026
 - NEA's primary project-based funding program.
- Military Bands – America250 Program
 - Deadline: February 23, 2026
 - Awards: \$10,000–\$20,000, non-matching
 - Supports performances and educational programming with U.S. military bands.
 - States and regionals are not eligible but are encouraged to share widely with constituents.

- City Art Poster Project
 - NEA and the U.S. Conference of Mayors launched the 250th Anniversary City Art Poster Project, inviting cities to collaborate with artists to create commemorative posters.

Freedom 250 Branding

- NEA has updated its branding to reflect participation in the Freedom 250 public-private partnership. New logo use is required moving forward for NEA staff and grantees.

Reporting & Compliance Changes

- A new midpoint progress report requirement applies when the grant period of performance exceeds one year.
- NEA does not anticipate major revisions to the general terms and conditions for FY26.
- A new special term will apply regarding allowable and non-allowable subgrants to individuals.

Award Timing & America250 Outlook

- Award letters are not expected to be delayed this year.
- No current indication of additional FY25 America250 funding.
- FY27 priorities are under development, with guidance expected later in 2026.

Poetry Out Loud Program Update

- NEA literary arts staff have returned, restoring internal capacity for Poetry Out Loud.
- Work is underway to secure poem permissions, allowing for:
 - More contemporary poetry
 - Expanded anthology offerings
- Goal: return to earlier distribution timelines, allowing schools to prepare in late summer.
- Overall direction reflects commitment to program stability and rebuilding toward pre-pandemic operations.

NEA Organizational Update

- NEA's Partnership Office staffing has stabilized, restoring continuity for states and locals.
- Agency structure now emphasizes cross-disciplinary collaboration rather than separate artistic discipline units.

Dedicated accessibility staffing has not yet been restored, though accessibility remains embedded across funding criteria and regional partnership support.

Resources Shared in Chat

- Kansas Music Ecosystem Initiative:
<https://www.soundmusiccities.com/kansas-music-cities-together>
- Vermont Humanities Project Grants (America250 distribution):
<https://www.vermonthumanities.org/grants/for-applicants/project-grants/>
- Creative Economy Dashboard Vendor (Colorado):
<https://westwoodecon.com/patrick-adler-bio>
- Otis Creative Economy Dashboard (California):
<https://www.otis.edu/about/initiatives/creative-economy/dashboard.html>
- NEA links (shared by Lara Garritano):
 - Grants for Arts Projects: <https://www.arts.gov/grants/grants-for-arts-projects>
 - Military Bands Program: <https://www.arts.gov/grants/military-bands>
 - Freedom250 Logo Page: <https://www.arts.gov/grants/manage-your-award/nea-logo>
 - NEA Panelist Signup: <https://www.arts.gov/Panelist-Signup>